

THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

THE MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE
& THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT IN THE REVOLUTION

Lenin's The State and Revolution

Short General Introduction

[The State and Revolution](#) is a book of Lenin's that was written in the months between the February and October Russian Revolutions of 1917.

The book is an uncompromising description of The State and of how it can be revolutionised, written as a revisit to, and critique of, the writings of Marx and Engels on the one hand, and of those of various reformist, opportunist and anarchist characters on the other hand, all the way up to Karl Kautsky.

At the outbreak in 1914 of the war that was still going on in 1917, Kautsky had been the leading renegade among the German Social Democrats of the 2nd International. The split that Kautsky and others caused, allowed the war to happen. If the proletarian international had remained solid, the war could not have happened. The war only came to an armistice, in the West, in the following year. Kautsky continued to be a renegade until his death in 1938.

The State and Revolution is well worth studying in its entirety of six chapters. In form, it is ideal for the Freirean method of

pedagogy through study circles. Each of the six chapters is of a suitable length for reading and discussion by a group that meets weekly. This Communist University course also includes parts of some of the documents mentioned by Lenin in the book, with other relevant and related material, and is thereby extended to our standard course-length of ten parts.

One problem that appears in relation to the State is whether, or to what extent, the State can be treated as benign, or developmental? In the SACP we do not repudiate Lenin, yet we still praise state ownership and state “delivery”. How are these things reconciled?

If the State is benign, then why would we want it to wither away?

But if the state is but “*a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*” [Marx/Engels, Communist Manifesto], and “*an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class*” [Lenin, State and Revolution] then how can it at the same time be beneficial?

We will reflect on these matters, among others, as we go through the work.

Lenin realised that the eventual transition to communism had to be secured in the process of the transition to socialism. He realised that there would be a moment of danger when it would be possible that the worker’s state could redevelop the characteristics of the bourgeois state.

This is what happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin, and the eventual consequence was the collapse and break-up of the Soviet Union into a scattering of bourgeois states. The revolution was not permanent, after all. The undead bourgeois state re-grew itself like a “Terminator”.

The next post will open the discussion of Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* with Lenin’s return to Petrograd in April 1917, and his declaration, at the Finland Station, of the “April Theses”.

- To download the full *State and Revolution* course in PDF files, [please click here](#)